THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) As on 31.1.99, 1469 number of electronic exchanges are functioning in Gujarat. District-wise details are placed given in the Statement. *(See* below)

(b) There is no manual telephone exchange functioning in Gujarat.

(c) and (d) Do not arise in view of (b) above.

Statement

S. No.	Name of District	No. of electronic exchanges functioning as on 31.1.1999
1.	Ahmedabad Gandhinagar	104
2.	Bharuch	58
3.	Kutch-Bhuj	111
4.	Bhavnagar	74
5.	Jamnagar	73
6.	Junagadh	92
7.	Kheda	111
8.	Banaskantha	100
9.	Mehsana	127
10	Panchmahal	69
11	Rajkot	119
12	Surat	65
13	Sabarkantha	95
14	Surendranagar	75
15	Amreli	60
16	Vadodara	74
17	Valsad Ahwa-dang	62
	TOTAL	1469

New Telecom Policy

1431. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have set up a Special Group, headed by the Minister of External Affairs, to formulate the New Telecom Policy by 31st March, 1999;

(b) whether it is a fact that the discussion paper on the said policy, which was released by the Group on Telecommunication (GoT) on 23rd January, 1999 failed to cheer the Telecom Industry, as reported in the Economic Times, New Delhi dated 26th January, 1999; and

(c) if so, whether Government have consulted so far all concerned parties—the licensor, regulator, operator and the consumer and by when the final picture will be made clear?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) to (c) Government have set up a Group on Telecommunication (GoT) headed by the then Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission and now Minister of External Affairs to give recommendations for the formulation of a New Telecom Policy. A discussion paper on New Telecom Policy was released by GoT on Internet soliciting views and comments from the Public. A large number of comments have been received from various sections including the Group on Industries (In GoT), Regulator, Operators and consumers. All these are under consideration of the GoT. The final picture on the policy will emerge only after GoT has finalised its recommendations.

Missing Money Order

1432. SHRI SURYABHAN PATIL VAHADANE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Governments attention has been drawn to the item which appeared in the Action Line Column of the Hindustan Times, Delhi Edition dated the 11th May, 1998 under the caption "Missing M.O.

(b) whether the said money had been refunded to the grievancee in case of Money Order Receipt No. 1101 dated the 21st April, 1997 from Dehradun (UP), Post Office;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) if the answer to part (b) above be in affirmative, what corrective measures had been initiated against the persons responsible for the same, as these incidents are tarnishing the image of the Postal Department?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) On enquiries, the original money order was found not paid to the payee, A duplicate money order was got issued and the amount was paid back to the remitter on 23.2.99.

(c) In view of (b) above, does not. arise.

(d) Following corrective measures have been intiated by the Department to avoid recurrence of such irregularities:—

(i) Postmaster General, Dehradun Region has been asked to thoroughly investigate the matter, fix responsibility on the part of the officials responsible for this delay and taken suitable action against them. He has also been asked to thoroughly review the entire Public Grievances Redressal Machinery in Dehradun Region, more particularly in Dehradun Division.

(ii) As a result of the investigations made by the Postmaster General, Dehradun Region, two Postal Assistants found responsible for delay in payment of the aforesaid money order, have been transferred out of station and disciplinary proceedings initiated against them. Two Senior Postmasters working at Dehradun Head Post Office found responsible for administrative lapses have also been identified for suitable action against them.

Setting up of a National Internet Backbone

1433. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Department of Telecommunications is setting up a national internet backbone;

(b) if so, what are its features;

(c) what is the estimated investment on this project;

(d) what are the details thereof; and

(e) when it is expected to come into force?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Department of Telecommunications has planned to set up a National Internet Backbone (NIB) covering all parts of the country. This backbone, to start with, will have a capacity of 8 Mbps and go upto 155 Mbps by the year 2000. 6 Nodes will have international connectivity at 34 Mbps. The NIB will act as a transmission media to carry the Internet traffic both Government and Private to the nearest International Gateway. It will also act as a facilitator for Internet Service Provider (ISP) to ISP interconnection within the country besides facilitating roaming.

(c) Rs. 86.00 Crores.

(d) National Internet Backbone (NIB) is proposed to have multi-tier structure consisting of 3 tiers. The first tier of NIB will consist of large stations with high capacity digital trunks with highest level of redunlancy. Type B and C nodes shall be smaller nodes with lesser access requirements. In addition, DOT proposes to have Remote Access Server to serve Internet Dial UP Subscribers in 45 locations consisting of 14 type A nodes and 31 Type B nodes in the first phase for which the tenders have been floated. This Internet Backbone is expected to